



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

2023 Student Commencement Address

Lynn Al Aridi

Beirut, Saturday, June 10, 2023

Isn't it weird that our first day of classes at AUB was not actually our first day at AUB? We had spent a year before trying to memorize the names of our new classmates on a zoom screen, as our friend from school texted us privately asking us if our screen was lagging too. The most fun we had was when a student forgot his mic open, and we could hear his mom calling him for breakfast in the background.

In fact, for most of us, coming to campus during our second year truly felt like our first day of university. Some of us had just moved to dorms for the first time in our lives, with roommates that we did not know, and with a whole new world right in front of us. After almost a year and a half at home, we were overwhelmed with the sheer number of students on campus. Who knew that being part of a crowd could be so exhilarating! Memorizing faces with half of them hidden by masks was admittedly hard, and I'm sure we were all confused at one point if that guy over there is really the one who has been sitting next to us for the past month.

As we eased into the AUB community, we started discovering little pleasures: A cat giving us a hug when we really need it, napping in the green oval after a long day, walking on campus at night under the lamps' yellowish hues, or listening to a heartbreaking melody being played on the West Hall piano,...

For many of us, AUB is not just the university in which we have received an outstanding education. It is also the place in which we have found a community, made life-long friends, fallen in love, and discovered our truest selves. AUB is what we will remember when we are a thousand miles away in a foreign country.

American University of Beirut

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb

aub.edu.lb

Someone once told me that AUB is a piece of heaven in Lebanon, and I agree

AUB is the rush we feel once we finish an exam, the passion a professor infuses in us when talking about his/her favorite subject, the sense of independence that accompanies deciding who to vote for in the next student elections, and the newfound realizations that break apart our old rigid beliefs.

Because when you're at AUB among people of different races, ethnicities, religions, social statuses, and genders, you know that these characteristics are not what define a good human. You know that it is kindness, humbleness, open-mindedness, and authenticity that make a great human being. You know that no matter what position you achieve in life, you are just as equal to every other human on this planet.

AUB's environment has shaped us into better versions of ourselves. We are all a little kinder, a little smarter and a lot more accepting of opinions we do not agree with. We should all be proud of ourselves. We have worked hard to get to where we are today, whether emotionally or academically, and it has not been an easy journey. We have sweated over exam questions we did not know the answers to. We have cried over failed tests and incomprehensible analyses. We have pushed our eyelids open when all we wanted to do was fall asleep. We have refused countless invitations in order to finish that last chapter. We have broken down time and again, but we have gotten back up. Every. Single. Time.

And for that, I am proud of us. We have made it. We have achieved our dream

And we couldn't have done it without the phenomenal professors who have run the extra mile to make sure online classes would be just as engaging as in-person ones. They who have made sure we will always have more questions about the world when we left their classes than we did when we came in. They who have come back from world-class universities in order to give back to the new generations. They who have been patient, understanding, and loving, I want to thank you. We couldn't have done it without your endless support.

And to our amazing parents who have struggled to get us into AUB and have struggled to keep us here, Thank you. The plate of food you got us while

studying, your words of encouragement, and your pride in us are what kept us going.

To the faculty, staff, and administration, I know it has not been an easy year. But you have persevered in your efforts to make sure we got the best education possible. Thank you for providing us with countless opportunities that were essential in helping us build our personalities.

To my peers, thank you for being here. Thank you for all the efforts you have made to support each other, whether through student councils or simply through listening to a friend. Thank you for not giving up when it was easy to. Thank you for giving us this wonderful moment to look back on.

And now that we have taken the first step on the road to success, it is time to take another.

So Class of 2023, what's your new dream?